

# Global Monthly Surveillance Report

## Making a Difference for Refugee Children in Europe

ISSUE #2 – SEPTEMBER 2016

### 1. Migration trends, facts and figures

When looking at the movement in the region it is important to take into account the new arrivals by sea and land as well as the number of people stranded along the routes. Since January 2016, 313,972 arrivals were registered by the sea (out of which 28% were children, 18% women and 54% men<sup>1</sup>). The top 5 nationalities are Syrian (28%), Afghani (14%), Iraqi (9%), Nigerian (8%), and Eritrean (5%). During the reporting period the average daily number of arrivals increased at two main entry points: at the beginning of October there was an average of 1,932 daily arrivals to Italy and 178 to Greece. This report focusses on the Balkan region.

Month	Average arrivals per day to Italy	Average arrivals per day to Greece
January	176	2,248
February	132	1,984
March	312	(before agreement, 1st to 8th): 1,375 (after agreement, 9th to 30th): 701
April	305	131
May	643	47
June	746	70
July	782	66
August	662	119
September	569	111
October	1,932	178

*Average daily arrival to Europe to Italy and Greece as of 5 October<sup>2</sup>*

Though the number of registered arrivals along the countries of the Balkan route is much lower than in Italy, the number of registered stranded migrants and refugees is high and increasing, mainly in Greece (60,067) Serbia (4,992) and Bulgaria (7,070)<sup>3</sup>. As a result of stricter border management and access to territory policies in the Central European region (especially in Hungary), the length of stay of people stranded at borders has increased from several days up to several weeks or months and requires adjustment in the reception and support mechanisms in place for migrants and refugees, including children.

1 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

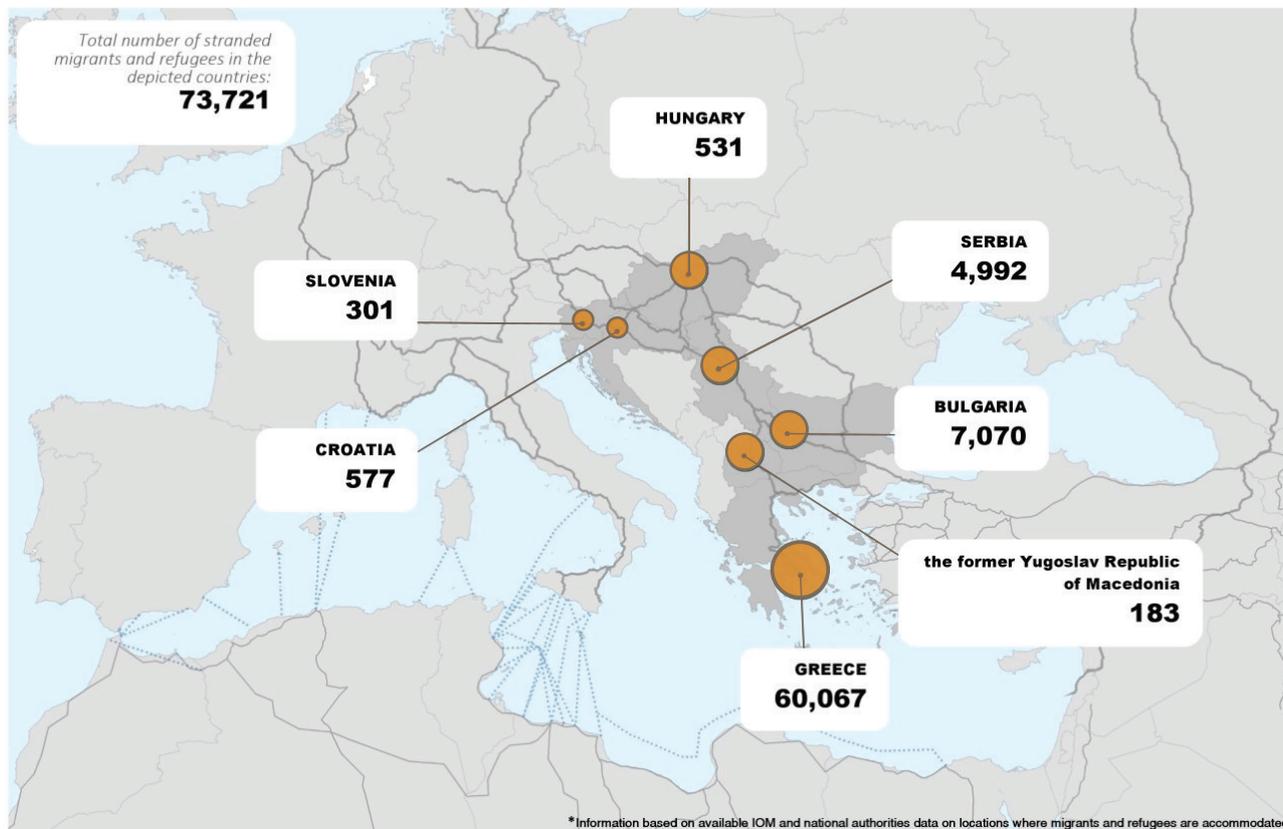
2 IOM weekly flows compilation No 26, 6 October 2016 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>

3 Weekly flows Compilation No 26 6 October 2016 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>

## OVERVIEW: STRANDED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Stranded migrants and refugees in Greece, FYR of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Bulgaria\* 5 October 2016

Disclaimer: Base Map Source: ESRI. This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.



Stranded people along the Balkan route as of 5 October

### In Tdh countries of intervention

The harsh Hungarian border control and push-back policy have resulted in alleged human rights violations by authorities at both the Serbian and Hungarian border<sup>4</sup> while push-backs have also been reported in Croatia and Romania. As a consequence Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian authorities implemented stricter border controls while violence at the borders was reported as posing a major concern, especially for children.

**Albania** is not a country with a significant number of entries but is concerned about a potential increase and the challenges that this would raise<sup>5</sup>. As of October 3, 633 people were apprehended after having irregularly entered Albania (147 people between 6 September and 5 October). All of them were returned to Greece. Between 22 September and 5 October, 18 people (including UASC) were apprehended crossing from Albania to Kosovo.

In **Bulgaria** there were 2,046 asylum applications lodged in September. This brings the total of asylum applications to 14,280 for 2016. Additionally in September 114 people were granted refugee status, 60 subsidiary protection, 232 received a negative decision and 744 procedures were terminated<sup>6</sup>.

In **Hungary**, asylum seekers can only access the territory through the transit zones with a maximum of 15 to

4 See Human Rights Watch interview accessible at: [childhub.org/en/child-protection-multimedia-resources/human-rights-watch-lydia-gall-interview-about-situation](http://childhub.org/en/child-protection-multimedia-resources/human-rights-watch-lydia-gall-interview-about-situation)

5 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-facing-flow-of-refugees-as-transit-country-09-30-2016>

6 <http://www.oref.government.bg/?cat=21>



20 persons allowed to cross on a daily basis. In September, 1,118 people filed an asylum claim in Hungary<sup>7</sup>, 152 people were apprehended for irregular entry and 2,352 people were reported to have been 'blocked entry'. Since the beginning of the year, 325 people were granted asylum<sup>8</sup>.

In **Macedonia** there was no arrival officially registered by local authorities this month but according to local organization Open Gate-La Strada, the number of daily entries ranges from 80 to 150. 6 asylum applications were submitted this month in Macedonia. Migrants and refugees enter at the southern border of the country and head north in the direction of Serbia, provided they are not caught and deported back to Greece.

In **Romania**, the media<sup>9</sup> reported an increasing number of entries of migrants and refugees in the country through the Danube, though the exact number is not available. Border guards with dogs were dispatched to apprehend migrants in border areas of Giurgiu County in Romania<sup>10</sup>.

Finally in **Serbia**, UNHCR estimates that there are 5,800 migrants and refugees currently present on Serbian territory<sup>11</sup>. Between 3 and 5 October, 214 entries were reported by UNHCR and its partners, out of which 71% entered from Bulgaria, 18% from Albania and 10% from Macedonia. In 2016, 9,320 people asked for asylum and 68 received a positive decision.

## 2. Legal and political developments on asylum

### 2.1. At regional level

At the regional level, several legislative and policy reforms and/or initiatives are in development, with recent agreements and declarations that raise major concerns and are likely to lead to systematic violations of human rights under both EU Law and international human rights standards, particularly the 1951 Geneva convention. Acting under the framework of the **European Agenda on Migration** (published in May 2015), the European Union has continued an exchange with civil society in order to bring about the necessary changes to the Common European Asylum System.

One major change concerns the transformation of FRONTEX, the former EU entity mandated to support Member States in improving their (external) border management capacities, into a new fully-fledged entity called the "European Border and Coast Guard Agency", which has been allocated additional resources, both financial and technical, in order to carry out its new mandate. The newly established agency will go beyond its role in reinforcing Member States' capacities at external borders through joint operations and rapid border interventions and will now be entrusted with monitoring and coordination responsibilities, as well as the possibility to "**intervene in urgent situations either at the request of a Member State or on the basis of a Council decision when a Member State is unable or unwilling to act**"<sup>12</sup>.

As far as the EU Relocation Framework is concerned (the mechanism aiming at relocating refugees and asylum seekers already present on the territory of the EU), delays in reaching the initial September 2015 targets continue to be experienced and relocation numbers from Greece and Italy remain far below the

7 A total of 26,877 people asked for asylum in Hungary in 2016

8 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-october-2016/>

9 <http://www.romania-insider.com/migrants-cross-danube-boat-romania-way-western-europe/>

10 <http://www.balkan.eu.com/canine-teams-dispatched-detect-illegal-migrants-border-areas-giurgiu-county/>

11 UNHCR Serbia update 3-5 October 2016 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=2030>

12 [http://ec.europa.eu/news/2016/10/20161006\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/news/2016/10/20161006_en.htm)

expectations. As of October 7th there were 5,878 relocations, 4,609 from Greece and 1,269 from Italy<sup>13</sup>. Only people coming from countries that have a 75% recognition rate are eligible under this mechanism, leaving aside persons in clear need of protection such as Afghans, who represent the second main nationality of arrivals (14%) through the Mediterranean Sea in 2016 and the main nationality of unaccompanied minors. Additionally, since June, Iraqis are also excluded from the relocation schemes<sup>14</sup>.

As far as the EU Resettlement Framework, a policy aimed at providing a common approach between Member States to facilitate the arrival of persons in need of international protection from third countries in a legal (and safer) way, by 28 of September 2016, **10'695** people have been resettled since the adoption of the July 2015 scheme (of the agreed 22,504 under the July 2015 scheme), a progress of 2,427 since the last edition of this report. Additionally, **1,071** Syrian refugees have been resettled from Turkey between June and 27 September, tripling the number of people resettled and bringing the total number from Turkey under the EU-Turkey Statement to **1,614**.

Since the agreement between the **EU and Turkey** was concluded the low number of persons arriving by sea to the Greek islands continues to demonstrate its effectiveness, while, as mentioned above, the relocation mechanism under this agreement has started.

On this basis the EU also concluded its negotiations with Afghanistan, striking a deal with a similar underlying aim as that concluded with Turkey. The political arrangements entitled “**The EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on Migration issues**”<sup>15</sup> has placed at its core the fight against irregular migration, but in practice is likely to result in smoother procedures to ensure that Member States can deport large numbers of Afghan asylum seekers back to Afghanistan, including unaccompanied and separated children as well as other vulnerable persons. Reintegration assistance and overall funding schemes to “support” failed applicants will be provided by the EU as part of the deal.

## 2.2. In selected countries

- On October 2, Hungarians were asked to participate in a referendum about the resettlement quotas. The question asked was “Do you want the European Union to be entitled to prescribe the mandatory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens in Hungary without the consent of the National Assembly?” The referendum was found legally invalid after the participation only reached 39.4%. However Prime Minister Victor Orban claimed a wide victory after 98% of valid votes were cast in favour of the “no” position. On 10 October the government considered amending the constitution introducing provisions that would make the “forced resettlement” unconstitutional. Amendments will be debated in the Parliament on 17 October and the vote is scheduled for 7 November 2016.
- Bulgarian authorities are to increase EU border controls thanks to a 108 million Euro allocation. The President of the EU commission said that the agreement should be finalized by 7 October<sup>16</sup>.
- A group of 200 people<sup>17</sup> who have been stranded in Belgrade for months started to walk towards the Hungarian border in sign of protest. The protesters were mainly single men but also included children. The situation for single men in Serbia is even more complex since their asylum application in the transit

<sup>13</sup> <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.easo.europa.eu/questions-and-answers-relocation>

<sup>15</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu\\_afghanistan\\_joint\\_way\\_forward\\_on\\_migration\\_issues.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_afghanistan_joint_way_forward_on_migration_issues.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/serbia-refugees-hungarian-border-macedonia-bulgaria?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/serbia-refugees-hungarian-border-macedonia-bulgaria?CMP=tw_t_gu)



zones are considered inadmissible (in application of the safe third country concept) and their access to Hungarian territory refused. This is raising concerns, especially for UASCs as age assessment procedures are not always properly carried out in the transit zones.

- It is estimated that 700 people are staying in Belgrade in appalling conditions. In response to the situation and the rising number of people stranded in Serbia, the government planned to increase patrols at the Macedonian and Serbian border to reduce further arrivals. This could possibly result in an increased use of the Albanian route.

### 3. Child Protection issues: vulnerability situations encountered during the period

#### 3.1. Qualitative information on reception conditions for families with children

Across the region the increasing number of stranded people continues to pose challenges as far as reception conditions are concerned.

In **Bulgaria**, authorities warned on 4 October that the accommodation centers are working at 7% beyond their capacities. There are currently 5,568 people hosted in the centers, some of which have been equipped with additional beds<sup>18</sup>. At the occasion of its latest on-site visit in Bulgaria, Tdh was informed of the presence of 595 UASCs on the Bulgarian territory, as well as 1561 migrants and refugees placed in detention centers, with children accounting for an average of one-third. The need to improve reception conditions for children and create separated spaces from adults should be prioritized while the immigration detention of children should be put to an end, in line with the Committee on the Rights of the Child 2012 Day of General Discussion's recommendations.

Human Rights Watch published "Why Are You Keeping Me Here?": Unaccompanied Children Detained in **Greece**<sup>19</sup>, a report about the routine use of arbitrary and prolonged detention of unaccompanied minors in Greece. It points to unsanitary conditions and limited access to services.

There are currently 235 people being accommodated in different centres in **Macedonia**. In Tabanovce and Gevgelija people are still detained in practice. They are not allowed to go out of the camps and have therefore limited access to services, a situation which raises major concerns especially for children. The number of migrants and refugees in the camps remains unchanged as new arrivals are limited unless important health issues are reported. There have been reports in Gevgelija of deportation back to Greece after police interviews were made, including in cases concerning families and UASC.

In Tabanovce, people who are pushed back from Serbia and come to the transit centre are deported to Greece. The absence of official information about Serbian police violence contrasts with returnees' systematic reports of violence when coming back to Tabanovce. This appears to affect the overall number of migrants and refugees in Macedonia which seems to be increasing<sup>20</sup>.

In **Serbia** 81% of the 5,800 estimated migrants and refugees are hosted in asylum and transit centres and one out of three people is a child. The length of stay in the country increased from a few days before July to

18 [http://www.novinite.com/articles/176628/Bulgaria's+Migrant+Centers+'Overcrowded'?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter#sthash.WZkQHcMT.dpuf](http://www.novinite.com/articles/176628/Bulgaria's+Migrant+Centers+'Overcrowded'?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter#sthash.WZkQHcMT.dpuf)

19 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/09/08/why-are-you-keeping-me-here/unaccompanied-children-detained-greece>

20 Rising numbers in FYROM camps, 23 September, 2016 <https://newsthatmoves.org/en/rising-numbers-in-fyrom-camps/>

more than 3 months as of today (due to stricter legislation in Hungary). The need for safe and child-friendly spaces in the centres continues to be reported.

### 3.2. Focus on UASC

There is still a general lack of information available at the regional level in relation to UASC, family separation and family reunification. Authorities do not collect information on whether asylum seekers arrive with or without family and there is no data available on the number of family reunification requests received in 2016 in EU member states<sup>21</sup>.

According to UNHCR's last profiling reports (published in July), 6% of Syrian<sup>22</sup> respondents have been (separated) from a family member during the journey. Of the 16 reports of separation, none had found the separated individuals at the time of the interview. 25% of Afghan<sup>23</sup> respondents had been separated from a family member during the journey. Of the 45 reports of separations, only 3 had found the separated individuals at the time of the interview. 9% of the Afghans interviewed identified themselves as Unaccompanied Children.

The current practices at the Hungarian transit zones were reported as generating cases of UASC according to Amnesty international's last report "Hungary: Stranded Hopes".

Family reunification is still a challenge for many families across the region and recent legal changes made it even more difficult. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) republished a note on family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection in Europe, which provides an "overview of the most pertinent legal aspects of family reunification within Europe<sup>24</sup>". It highlights the increasingly stricter rules and regulations in terms of family reunification that families face. There is a need for similar research in non-EU countries such as Macedonia, where in the past months stranded families have been stopped from reunifying because of a lack of available information but also authorities not being familiar with the process.

Finally, a report the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union focussed on family tracing and family reunification in EU countries<sup>25</sup>. The report demonstrates that Dublin requests for family reunification remained quite low in 2015 and 2016, which may be explained by the lack of knowledge around the procedure and its length. Information seems again to be key in this process.

21 [FRA monthly data collection on the current migration situation in the EU. Thematic focus: Family tracing and family reunification: September 2016](#)

22 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=1727>

23 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=1728>

24 <http://www.ecre.org/information-note-on-family-reunification-for-beneficiaries-of-international-protection-in-europe/>

25 [FRA monthly data collection on the current migration situation in the EU. Thematic focus: Family tracing and family reunification: September 2016](#)



*The current initiative aims at collecting and analyzing already existing data or bridge gaps on child protection issues that have not yet been made available to policy makers in order to feed sound policy making processes. In parallel, it will allow Terre des hommes (Tdh) and its partners to keep live track of the situation of children on the move in order to more effectively deploy resources as soon as needs arise.*

*The monthly Monitoring and Surveillance Report will first and foremost complement existing monitoring initiatives, such as those developed by IOM in the framework of their displacement tracking mechanism, or UNHCR through their global, regional or national updates, but also build on them. In that sense, and given the initial limited geographical coverage as exposed above, it is crucial that all parties interested in contributing and feeding this initiative can do so in an easy way. [We strongly encourage those of you who are able to share data or contribute in any other way to glance at the following webpage and share your views and opinions regarding the type of data that is critically lacking as well as the types of contribution you could bring to our joint initiative.](#)*